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6-minute date Singles try their luck finding a love match with PreDating

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For a group of Pensacola singles, Wednesday night was a welcome alternative to hanging out in bars, going on dreadful blind dates or having a friend hook you up in that quest to finding Mr. or Miss Right.

Cupid.com's PreDating event at Zea Rotisserie & Grill provided about 60 single professionals a chance to go on 15 six-minute dates in a setting conducive to socializing and getting to know each other. Most participants walked away saying it was better and less awkward than they expected.

"I came completely unprepared. I went with the flow," said Carl Heim, 23. "I was one of those people that was skeptical at first, but now that I've done it, I would definitely recommend it to someone else."

In case you missed scenes featuring speed dating on HBO's "Sex in the City," or big-screen movies such as "Hitch" and "The Forty-Year-Old Virgin," here's how speed dating works:

- Equal numbers of men and women rotate from one single to

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Karoline Myers and Nick Korent get acquainted during Cupid.com's PreDating event Wednesday at Zea Rotisserie & Grill. About 60 people participated in Pensacola, while other speed-dating events were being conducted in more than 90 cities in the United States and Canada.
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the next, going on six-minute dates. On Wednesday, there were two age groups. The first included women ages 21 to 33 and men ages 23 to 35. The second included all singles ages 29 to 45.

- After each date, participants record on paper whether they would be interested in hearing from the other person again. The responses are recorded electronically after the event.
- Within two to three days, Cupid.com will send each participant an e-mail with contact information for those they matched with and those who were interested in them. Only first names are used to ensure privacy.

Speed dating is based on research that indicates chemistry between two people occurs within the first few minutes of meeting.

Karoline Myers, 31, of Pensacola, said she wouldn't hesitate to speed date again.

"It was a great way to meet people," she said. "I didn't find six minutes long enough for some. But for others, it was too long. I think in six minutes, you can definitely determine if there is an interest."

Some participants came with a list of questions. Others just let the conversation flow.

Cecily Newton, 32, of Pensacola, who received free tickets to the event, said she had no problem talking for six minutes with each eligible bachelor.

All the conversations were engaging, she said, and it was refreshing to her to meet people in an atmosphere where the focus was on conversation.

"I didn't really know what to expect," Newton said. "But it was

WHAT: Cupid.com PreDating.

WHEN: Feb. 22 at 6:20 p.m. (for all single professionals ages 49 to 57); Feb. 22 at 8:30 p.m. (for all single professionals ages 41 to 49).

WHERE: Zea Rotisserie & Grill, 605 E. Gregory St., Pensacola.

COST: \$35 if registered two days in advance, \$40 afterward.

DETAILS: Visit Cupid.com/predating to sign up. There you'll find information about scheduled PreDating events in March and April.

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Lori Lacquement, left, the dating event coordinator, explains the rules before the event gets under way.
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Cupid.com's PreDating participants record on paper whether they would be interested in hearing from the other person again.
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worth a try. It's two hours. This is much different from meeting guys at a bar."

For Jeff Ferris, all the conversations were enjoyable, but he felt a real connection with just two participants.

"I figure that's pretty good odds," he said. "If it doesn't work out, I'll be back."

Along with about 60 participants in Pensacola, about 5,000 other singles were simultaneously speed dating Wednesday in more than 90 cities in the United States and Canada, said Lori Lacquement, event coordinator in Pensacola. Cupid.com is attempting to make the Guinness Book of World Records with the largest speed-dating event in history.

Most participants said they wouldn't hesitate to recommend speed dating to a friend.

"I would because of the quality of the people that you meet," said Mark Pesce, 39, of Orange Beach, Ala. "It beats the heck out of meeting ladies at a bar."



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